

system data from unauthorized change.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of an operating environment of an expense management system in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0010] FIG. 2 shows relationships among modules of the expense management system in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention, including a basic information memory module;

[0011] FIG. 3 shows contents of a department master file of the basic information memory module of FIG. 2;

[0012] FIG. 4 shows contents of a supplier master file of the basic information memory module of FIG. 2;

[0013] FIG. 5 shows contents of an article master file of the basic information memory module of FIG. 2;

[0014] FIG. 6 is a flowchart of managing a budget using the expense management system in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention; and

[0015] FIG. 7 is a flowchart showing operation of the expense management system in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

[0016] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of an operating environment of an expense management system in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. An electronic communications network 2 connects a plurality of

terminal units 1 with a host 3. The terminal units 1 may be personal computers provided for users (not shown in FIG. 1). Each terminal unit 1 can be linked with a telephone, a fax machine or a scanner. The electronic communications network 2 can be an Ethernet, the Internet or an intranet.

[0017] A user can send a request from a terminal unit 1 to the host 3 via the electronic communications network 2. A user can use the terminal unit 1 to access information stored in the host 3. After receiving a specific request sent from any of the terminal units 1, the host 3 processes the request and feeds a response back to the relevant terminal unit 1.

[0018] FIG. 2 shows relationships among modules of the expense management system in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention. In the preferred embodiment, the host 3 comprises a basic information memory module 4, a transaction processing module 5, an inquiring and analyzing module 6, a statistical report module 7, and a system management module 8. The basic information memory module 4 is mainly used to store information about departments of an organization, suppliers, articles needed by the organization, and other related information. The information is stored in master file format. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the basic information memory module 4 comprises a department master file 41, a supplier master file 42, an article master file 43, and an other items master file 44.

[0019] The transaction process module 5 is mainly used to manage operations related to transactions, and comprises a budget management program 51, a budget and expense database 52, a transaction database 53 and a transaction process program 54. The budget management program 51 is used to control a budget of each department. The budget and expense database 52 is used for storing budget and expense information of each department generated from transactions. The transaction database 53 is used for storing information generated from transactions.

The user 50 uses the transaction process program 54 to process specific transaction activities such as purchase requisitions, purchases, and budget management.

[0020] The inquiring and analyzing module 6 inquires about information contained in the basic information memory module 4. Such information includes data about forms, articles, departments and suppliers. With the inquiring and analyzing module 6, a user can confirm if an article to be purchased is already listed in the article master file 43. If the article is not listed in the article master file 43, the user needs to add the article to the article master file 43. The user can also choose suppliers by accessing the supplier master file 42.

[0021] The statistical report module 7 comprises a basic information reporter 71 and an expense reporter 72. The basic information reporter 71 generates department information reports, expense item reports, supplier information reports, and article classification reports. The expense reporter 72 generates current month budget reports, excess budget reports, budget information, and expense information. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, a user can utilize the statistical report module 7 to conveniently print out a basic information report of a department, and to ascertain a current budget surplus and current expenses of a department.

[0022] The system management module 8 comprises a system user management sub-module 81 and a system data management sub-module 82. The system user management sub-module 81 manages basic information of users, including user classification, user department and user authorities. The system data management sub-module 82 comprises a department code management sub-module, a department budget locking management sub-module, and a form locking management sub-module. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, if a department's code is changed, the system data management sub-module 82 automatically updates information in the department master file 41 of the basic